PROBLEMS WITH THE ASA BOYCOTT RESOLUTION

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The current ASA boycott resolution suffers from the same flaws as the earlier resolution (see [here](http://spme.org/spme-research/american-studies-association-asa-proposed-resolution-on-academic-boycott-of-israeli-academic-institutions/15991/) for critiques of the previous resolution), except that it has compressed its claims into a terser text. Like the earlier version, this resolution is deceptive, from its stated purpose to its claims and the wider purpose for passing it. As my general objections below indicate, this resolution violates all principles of academic freedom and actually undermines its stated goals. As my specific rebuttals [see below] to this resolution indicate, the resolution is based on false and disputed accusations against Israel. Furthermore, the discussion process at the Convention was at best suspect, at worst a form of indoctrination. The panelists in the sessions about the boycott, Israel, and Palestine at the 2013 Convention all held one point of view. Many of them are prominent leaders of the boycott Israel campaign, and some are known for spreading false or dubious information about Israel and the Palestinians. The Convention organizers evidently made no effort to invite opponents to balance these discussions so the issues could be explored seriously and thoughtfully, in a way befitting scholars. Indeed, the National Council did not even see fit to distribute the AAUP’s letter opposing the boycott. Furthermore, the National Council’s letter to members urged endorsement of the resolution without referring to or including any references to the many articulate statements and evidence opposing the resolution. In short, the ASA did not try to promote honest, reflective, serious debate about a complex issue. This very process should alarm ASA members and is an indelible stain on the ASA’s reputation.

**General Comments about the Resolution**

1. This resolution asks ASA members to accept the claims it makes against Israel as accurate and undisputed, and to endorse a boycott of Israel on that basis. In fact, most of the claims are false, disputed, or distorted and based on unreliable or questionable sources. An academic association would fall below any reasonable academic standards if it passed a resolution based on claims it has not responsibly and seriously verified or evaluated.
2. This resolution strips away all context for Israel’s actions in order to convict it of malevolent wrongdoing. There is no mention of the wars and terrorism unleashed against Israel since its founding, nor of the Palestinian terrorist campaign launched in 2000 that claimed thousands of Israeli victims, nor of the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas that controls Gaza and is explicitly dedicated to the murder of Jews and “obliteration” of Israel according to its leaders and founding charter, nor of the over 14,000 rockets and mortars Hamas and other terrorists have fired at Israeli hospitals, schools, homes, and communities since 2005. There is no mention of Iran and its clients--Hamas, Hezbollah and Palestinian Islamic Jihad—that seek the destruction of Israel. Israel’s actions cannot be evaluated without including this context or its moral and legal rights to protect its men, women and children from terrorism and aggression. Nor does the resolution even acknowledge Israel’s peace offers—in 2000, 2001, and 2008—which were unceremoniously rejected or ignored by Palestinian leaders. No responsible, thinking person can ignore this wider context when passing judgment on a nation, yet this is precisely what the ASA is asking you to do.
3. This resolution is a clear attack on academic freedom, as the AAUP pointed out in its letter. Endorsing it will violate core ASA values and discredit the organization and its members. Proponents of the boycott, aware of this pitfall, have repeatedly defended themselves by saying that only Israeli institutions will be affected, not individual Israeli scholars. This is a spurious, illogical claim. Most scholars teach at universities, and cannot be completely separated from the schools and programs that hire them and pay their salaries. This would also prevent American universities from partnering with Israeli academic and research departments, a clear setback for academic freedom and the exchange of ideas. Furthermore, presumably Israeli-Arabs would be exempt from the boycott, regardless of their institutional affiliation, which would mean discrimination solely against Israeli Jews who would have unequal access to international conferences and other opportunities.

This resolution would deteriorate into blatant discrimination against Israelis. As one post-graduate Israeli student who is critical of Israeli policies wrote, during her studies in London, she encountered severe discrimination. “While their Palestinian fellows enjoy the political and financial support of active pro-Palestinian university societies and generous scholarships designed specifically for them, the implicit message to Israelis is often: It doesn’t really matter what you say or think, because we simply don't want to hear from you."[[1]](#endnote-1)

Even Palestinians do not boycott Israeli universities. Omar Barghouti, a BDS co-founder and leader, does not observe the academic boycott of Israel. In 2009, he enrolled in a PhD program at Tel Aviv University instead of pursuing the degree at a Palestinian university. When asked about this apparent hypocrisy, he declines to answer.[[2]](#endnote-2)

Al-Quds president, Sari Nusseibeh, opposed academic boycotts of Israel, calling instead for “cooperation based on mutual respect.”The school had 60 ongoing joint research projects with Israeli universities in 2009 alone.[[3]](#endnote-3)

1. In endorsing this resolution, you are not just being asked to punish Israel’s progressive, cosmopolitan academic community.[[4]](#endnote-4) You are also being asked to sacrifice, for a narrow political agenda, Israel’s cutting edge research in the sciences, biotechnology, environmental sustainability, medicine, high tech, and other fields that have already benefited people around the globe.
2. This resolution is uniquely prejudiced against only one nation and one group of people in the world: the Jewish people and the Jewish state. Despite the manifestly far worse violations of academic freedom and students’ rights by multiple nations in the region and beyond, this resolution singles out Israel alone for opprobrium. It also ignores the manifold violations of academic freedom and students’ rights of the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and the Palestinian Hamas government in Gaza whose violations have been amply recorded. [See [here]](http://spme.org/spme-research/american-studies-association-asa-proposed-resolution-on-academic-boycott-of-israeli-academic-institutions/15991/)
3. This resolution is deceptive, from its stated purpose to the effect of passing it. The resolution’s goal is not to protect the educational rights of Palestinians. The education issue is a pretext to push an extremist agenda. The resolution does not bother to set parameters about when the boycott could end. As the resolution openly states, it is part of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions [BDS] campaign, whose aim has never been the boycott itself, but rather the defamation of Israel on college campuses. The goal, openly stated by BDS, is to advance extremist Palestinian demands, including the Palestinian refugee “right of return”[[5]](#endnote-5) which would effectively dismantle the Jewish state and replace it with a Palestinian-majority state. You are being asked to sign a deceitful resolution whose ultimate goal is the destruction of Israel and the violation of Jewish rights to self-determination.

“It is well-known and understood that the Arabs, in demanding the return of the refugees to Palestine, mean their return as masters of the Homeland… they mean the liquidation of the State of Israel.”—Muhammad Salah al-Din Bey, Foreign Minister of Egypt, 1949[[6]](#endnote-6)

Dr. Norman Finkelstein, a notorious critic of Israel, underscored that BDS is not primarily concerned with Palestinian rights. BDS, he noted, is “not really talking about rights. They’re talking about [how] they want to destroy Israel.”[[7]](#endnote-7)

* Endorsing the BDS demand for a “right of return” would mean that the over five million Palestinians that UNRWA designates as refugees could move into Israel, effectively turning Israel into a Palestinian Arab state. Given the documented history of Arab and Palestinian anti-Semitism and the harsh treatment of minorities in Gaza, the Palestinian Authority, and neighboring countries, the new-majority Palestinian state would most likely promote discrimination and even violence and hatred of Jews.[[8]](#endnote-8)
* You are being asked to support the Arab League’s diplomatic, cultural, and economic boycott of Israel, implemented against the Jews in the Palestine Mandate in 1945, applied to the new state in 1948, long before any “occupation” or “settlements,” and still in effect today.[[9]](#endnote-9) The goal then, as it is now, is to strangle the Jewish state so it ceases to exist.
1. In passing this resolution, the ASA would be endorsing an extremist agenda that would have only a deleterious impact on Palestinian education and peace efforts, and violate international law by effectively dismantling a sovereign state whose right to exist is enshrined in international law[[10]](#endnote-10) and whose right to secure borders is enshrined in UN resolutions and international agreements.[[11]](#endnote-11) If the ASA wishes to advance reconciliation for peaceful coexistence, a peaceful solution to the conflict, and improvements for the Palestinian people, it should recommend constructive, positive actions, not simply destructive, punitive actions against one party in this complex conflict. If the ASA truly supports justice, progress, and human rights, it should oppose the BDS movement, because the BDS agenda violates all these principles.

**THE COMPLETE TEXT OF THE RESOLUTION (IN RED) WITH ANALYSIS (IN BLACK).**

**Whereas the American Studies Association is committed to the pursuit of social justice, to the struggle against all forms of racism, including anti-semitism, discrimination, and xenophobia, and to solidarity with aggrieved peoples in the United States and in the world;**

* These are admirable goals, but Israel’s academic institutions already share those values, though the ASA refuses to acknowledge that fact.
* It is extremely disturbing that the ASA would describe itself in this way without mentioning what should be its commitment to scholarship, research and education. According to the ASA constitution, its purpose is

“… the promotion of the study of American culture through the encouragement of research, teaching, publication, the strengthening of relations among persons and institutions in this country and abroad devoted to such studies, and the broadening of knowledge among the general public about American culture in all its diversity and complexity.”[[12]](#endnote-12)

* If the ASA’s new, additional mission is “pursuit of social justice,” then members should oppose this resolution which allies with the BDS movement and calls for discrimination and injustice against the Jewish state.

**Whereas the United States plays a significant role in enabling the Israeli occupation of Palestine...**

The underlying premise of this statement is misleading. It presumes that there is a Palestinian state that Israel has no right to “occupy.” In fact:

* Israel’s presence in the West Bank and East Jerusalem conforms to international law and agreements. The primary agreement between Israel and the Palestinians is the Oslo Accords, a document endorsed by the UN the EU, the U.S., Israel, and the Palestinians. According to the Oslo Accords, Israel will retain control of East Jerusalem and 60% of the West Bank until the two parties reach a final peace agreement which will determine the borders of the proposed Palestinian state.[[13]](#endnote-13) Thus far, no agreement has been reached.
* Israel does not occupy Gaza. It completely withdrew in August, 2005, even removing remains from Jewish cemeteries, and fulfilled international criteria for ending occupation as detailed by an International Committee of the Red Cross report.[[14]](#endnote-14)
* Israel offered the Palestinians a contiguous state in 2000 and 2008, but Palestinian leaders rejected those offers, and made no counter-offers. [[15]](#endnote-15)

…..**the expansion of illegal settlements and the Wall in violation of international law…..**

The invocation of “international law” is spurious and misleading. The purpose of the resolution is not to enforce international law, and it makes no serious effort to analyze international law and how it applies in this case. The resolution is solely a political document advancing an extremist political position and mindlessly repeating political slogans. In fact:

* The settlements are a political, not a legal, issue. They are legal under international law, according to numerous prestigious legal scholars, including former Dean of Yale Law School Eugene Rostow and premier international law professor Julius Stone.[[16]](#endnote-16) Equally important, signed agreements between Israel and the PLO do not prohibit settlement construction.[[17]](#endnote-17)
* Furthermore, the U.S. has considered Israeli settlements legal since 1981.[[18]](#endnote-18) Current U.S. policy is that Israel will keep the largest settlement blocs, where the vast majority of settlers live, in any peace deal. This is what President Obama referred to when he proposed land swaps.[[19]](#endnote-19) Those who are serious about the two state solution acknowledge that these land swaps are inevitable.
* According to the PA and human rights groups, the built-up areas of Israeli communities in the West Bank cover less than 2% of West Bank land, and the expansion referred to has occurred within those boundaries.[[20]](#endnote-20) The Jewish population of the settlements is expanding, but, not the land area.[[21]](#endnote-21)
* The security barrier (which is over 95% chain link fence) does inconvenience Palestinians, but it is not illegal. Even the International Court of Justice decision on the barrier was only an advisory opinion to the UN General Assembly and as such, is not binding in international law.[[22]](#endnote-22) Moreover, Israel did not present its case to the ICJ, and nearly every liberal democracy was opposed to the ICJ even hearing the case.[[23]](#endnote-23) The security barrier was erected solely in response to the 2nd Intifada, a brutal Palestinian terrorist campaign which killed over 1000 Israelis. The barrier has effectively put an end to suicide bombings in Israel and saved countless lives. Palestinians are entitled under Israeli law to petition Israeli courts to seek redress for grievances related to the construction of the barrier and have done so, successfully, repeatedly. Palestinians are also entitled to financial compensation for the use of their land.[[24]](#endnote-24)
* Parts of the security barrier do lie within the West Bank. The barrier deviates from the 1949 Armistice Lines (AKA the 1967 Green Line) in order to protect Israeli civilian communities in the West Bank.[[25]](#endnote-25)

….**as well as supporting the systematic discrimination against Palestinians, which has had documented devastating impact on the overall well-being, exercise of political and human rights, the freedom of movement, and the educational opportunities of Palestinians.**

This vague litany of unsubstantiated accusations is divorced from reality, and does not even distinguish between Palestinians who are Israeli citizens and Palestinians who are governed by Hamas in Gaza and the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank.

* Israel does not practice systematic discrimination against Palestinians who are Israeli citizens. Israel’s declaration of statehood ensured equal political and civil rights for all citizens regardless of religion, race, gender, or origin, and these values have been enshrined in law. Israel’s 25% non-Jewish minority has always had equal voting and political rights. Arab Israelis were elected to the first Knesset (parliament) in 1949 and have won as many as 14 seats in a single election. Some hold important positions in the government, court system, and military.[[26]](#endnote-26) Nor can it be claimed that Israel has had a “devastating impact” on Israeli-Arab well-being. In Israel, Israeli-Arabs have enjoyed more freedoms and an increasingly rising standard of living that far surpasses that of their neighbors throughout the region and beyond. Indeed, according to historian Efraim Karsh,

From the designation of Arabic as an official language, to the recognition of non-Jewish religious holidays as legal resting days for their respective communities, to the granting of educational, cultural, judicial, and religious autonomy, Arabs in Israel may well enjoy more formal prerogatives than ethnic minorities anywhere in the democratic world, not to mention the Middle East and the Muslim world.[[27]](#endnote-27)

* It is also true that like all multi-ethnic democracies, Israel struggles with discrimination and the disadvantages its minorities face, but it has adopted multiple programs, similar to American affirmative action, to close the gaps. This effort is especially true in education. Israel encouraged and facilitated Israeli Arab education. If in 1961, the average Israeli Arab student had only one year of schooling, by 2013, the average had soared to eleven years. [[28]](#endnote-28) Israel encourages Israeli Arab students to attend university, and has adopted programs to help them adapt to university life. The Beatrice Weston Unit for the Advancement of Students at the Technion, which mentors Arab students so they can adapt to academia, has helped cut Arab students’ drop-out rate in half, and is being imitated at other Israeli universities at the urging of the government.[[29]](#endnote-29) Arab students accounted for 10 percent of Hebrew University’s student population in 2008[[30]](#endnote-30)and 30% of Haifa University’s student body in 2012.[[31]](#endnote-31) In 2012, Israel’s Council on Higher Education launched a 300 million shekel plan to help minority students get to and succeed in college, including an extensive plan for mentoring them in university and opening information centers in Arab communities to encourage and help future college applicants. [[32]](#endnote-32)  The Council also mandated that Israeli colleges translate their websites into Arabic, set up workshops for Arab students to improve their Hebrew, and draw up plans for increasing their minority enrollment or lose government funding. [[33]](#endnote-33)
* Israel does not practice discrimination against Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. Israel never annexed these areas, and the Palestinians are not Israeli citizens and wish to have their own state. Today, Palestinians have their own governments, the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza, which govern 98% of the Palestinian population. Israel is not obliged to treat Palestinians as citizens, just as other liberal democracies do not treat other foreign nationals as citizens.
* Israel’s policies toward to the Palestinians cannot be evaluated without taking into account the Palestinian terrorist war launched against Israelis in 2000, which claimed thousands of casualties, or the 39,000 documented terrorist attacks against Israel between 2000 and 2012. This reality has forced Israel to take measures to protect the lives of Israeli men, women, and children from terrorism.
* Contrary to this claim, Palestinians have freedom of movement. Hamas, which now governs Gaza, has had complete control over Palestinian mobility in Gaza since Israel’s total withdrawal in 2005. Starting in 2000, Israel restricted freedom of movement in the West Bank, using checkpoints to prevent Palestinian terrorists from murdering Israeli civilians. As terrorist attacks decreased, Israel removed most of the checkpoints. By 2012, only 12 remained, and most are inactive unless there is a specific security threat.[[34]](#endnote-34) According to the human rights group B’Tselem, “Palestinians can now travel relatively freely within the West Bank.”[[35]](#endnote-35)
* Whatever “devastating impact” there has been on Palestinian well-beingover the last 13 years, it is because Palestinian leaders chose terrorism instead of peace in 2000, killing or wounding thousands of Israelis and necessitating Israel’s counter-terrorism measures. Palestinian leaders’, not Israeli, policies are impeding Palestinian students’ education and welfare.

	+ During its administration of the West Bank and Gaza, Israel did more to foster Palestinian education and welfare than any other government, including the Palestinian government in Gaza and the Palestinian Authority. Israel dramatically improved the poor state of Palestinian education once Jordan’s control of the West Bank and Egypt’s control of Gaza ended. Under Israeli administration between 1967 and 1994:[[36]](#endnote-36)
	+ The number of universities and colleges in the West Bank and Gaza soared from **zero** to seven, and networks of vocational schools and twenty community colleges and teacher-training seminaries were built.
	+ More children were educated. The number of students and elementary school classes rose 100% though the population grew only 28%.
	+ Literacy rates soared from only 50% of the population in 1967 to 86% of people over age 15.
	+ Israel instituted freedom of the press, assembly, and of academic research.
	+ Israel significantly improved Palestinian health. Israel built 146 health clinics in the West Bank and 20 in Gaza, and offered universal health insurance. Infant mortality rates dropped by two-thirds between 1970 and 1990, and Israel introduced a systematic program of inoculation that eradicated widespread childhood diseases like polio, whooping cough, tetanus, and measles. Life expectancy rose from 48 years in 1967 to 72 in 2000 and rose further to 74 in Gaza and 75 in the West Bank in 2011.[[37]](#endnote-37)
* Even today, despite Hamas’ repressive rule in Gaza, the PA’s problematic governance in the West Bank, and Israel’s counter-terrorism measures, the West Bank and Gaza enjoy a higher standard of living than all South Asian and Arab countries and even outpaced Brazil, Russia (adult literacy notwithstanding), India, and China according to recent UN Human Development reports.[[38]](#endnote-38)

**Whereas there is no effective or substantive academic freedom for Palestinian students and scholars under conditions of Israeli occupation…..**

Whatever academic freedom Palestinian students and scholars do or don’t have is determined by the Palestinian governments, not by Israel who has no control or influence over Palestinian media, education, or educational policies. Unfortunately, this resolution is silent about the manifold violations of academic freedom and students’ rights by the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and the Palestinian Hamas government in Gaza where censorship and the following violations and others have been amply recorded*:*

* The Hamas-controlled Ministry of Education pulled books of Palestinian folktales from school libraries because of their alleged “sexual innuendoes,” in March, 2007;[[39]](#endnote-39)
* Hamas abruptly fired 2,000 of Gaza’s 7,000 teachers to replace them with Hamas loyalists who would promote Hamas’ agenda. August, 2008;[[40]](#endnote-40)
* “Freedom of the press is nonexistent in the Gaza Strip… Freedom here means to express the views of the governing party only,” according to journalist Reham Abdel-Karim, Director of the Office of MBC in Gaza. Journalists are routinely threatened with violence and death;[[41]](#endnote-41)
* “Over the past two years, Palestinian journalists in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have been subjected to a systematic campaign of intimidation that has resulted in the death of some and the detention of others.” Palestinian-Israeli journalist Khaled Abu Toameh. Dec. 2008.[[42]](#endnote-42)
* Hamas has regularly denied Gaza students visas to attend school abroad, citing “cultural and social reasons.”[[43]](#endnote-43) In 2011, Hamas would not let 8 students travel to the U.S. for a year program scholarship for these reasons. The Palestinian Center for Human Rights [denounced](http://www.pchrgaza.org/portal/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7653:pchr-denounces-gaza-ministry-of-educations-decision-to-prevent-students-having-scholarships-to-study-in-usa-from-leaving-gaza-&catid=36:pchrpressreleases&Itemid=194) the decision, but Hamas would not yield. Hamas also opposed students travelling to the West Bank, and in 2010, [accused](http://elderofziyon.blogspot.com/2010/04/hamas-to-decrease-zionist-immorality-in.html) Fatah, which governs the West Bank, of “…spreading corruption and immorality among university students, especially the Islamic University in Gaza."

Nowhere does this resolution condemn the impact of Palestinian terrorism on Israeli students. Palestinian terrorists attempted 39,000 attacks, an average of nine a day, between 2000 and 2012.[[44]](#endnote-44) Hamas, whose covenant calls for the murder of Jews and “obliteration” of Israel,[[45]](#endnote-45) launched over 14,000 rockets and mortars into Israel’s civilian communities between 2005 and 2012[[46]](#endnote-46) that indiscriminately target and have hit Israeli nursery schools, middle schools, and universities, forcing closures. Israelis children in the town of Sderot suffer from PTSD, and Israeli schools near Gaza have repeatedly been forced to close. Israel finally fortified school buildings and playgrounds with bomb shelters for the children.[[47]](#endnote-47) Hamas fired a guided anti-tank missile at a clearly marked Israeli school bus on April 7, 2011.**[[48]](#endnote-48)** In 2008, a terrorist entered the library of the Mercaz Harav Yeshiva and the attack,[[49]](#endnote-49) the Hamas government called it a “heroic deed,”[[50]](#endnote-50) and a Palestinian poll found that 84% of West Bank residents interviewed supported the attack.[[51]](#endnote-51)

**…and Israeli institutions of higher learning are party to Israeli state policies that violate human rights and negatively impact the working conditions of Palestinian scholars and students;**

This document has offered no evidence that Israel violates international law and human rights, and this generic accusation should not be accepted without specific accusations, evidence, and debate. Those who make such claims are often driven by a political agenda and distort principles of international law and human rights in the service of that agenda.[[52]](#endnote-52) Most of the accusations against Israel are disputed by many military, legal, and human rights experts. For example, British Colonel (ret.) Richard Kemp testified to the UN Human Rights Council that “During Operation Cast Lead, the Israeli Defence Forces did more to safeguard the rights of civilians in a combat zone than any other army in the history of warfare.”[[53]](#endnote-53)

* This accusation strips away all context for Israeli actions, specifically the terrorist campaign which forced Israel to take measures to protect its men, women, and children, from over 14,000 rocket and mortar attacks, and from thousands of attempted terrorist acts. You cannot evaluate Israel’s actions or make the charge of human rights violations without specific evidence and debate.

**Whereas the American Studies Association is cognizant of Israeli scholars and students who are critical of Israeli state policies and who support the international boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement under conditions of isolation and threat of sanction;**

* Israel is an open society known for its robust, fractious debates. Israeli faculty members, who hold a wide range of opinions concerning Israeli-Palestinian relations, are also free to express, assert, and take action to advance those opinions, including opinions that are critical of the Israeli government’s policies.
* However, for good reason, only a handful supports academic boycotts. Most Israelis academics, like the AAUP and the 300 American university presidents who signed Columbia President Lee Bollinger’s letter against academic boycotts, recognize them as anathema to the fundamental principle of academic freedom.
* There is absolutely no evidence that there have been threats of sanctions against the few Israeli academics who advocate academic boycotts. While Neve Gordon, professor at Ben Gurion University, caused an uproar when he advocated boycotts in 2009, he retained his position. [[54]](#endnote-54) Similarly, Haifa University’s Ilan Pappe, criticized as much for his scholarship as for advocating academic boycotts, was not sanctioned nor did he lose his position. Haifa University’s president called on Pappe to resign, saying "It is fitting for someone who calls for a boycott of his university to apply the boycott himself,” but, committed to the principles of academic freedom, he added that the university “would not boycott Pappe nor would it take disciplinary steps against him, because boycotts destroy academic freedom.[[55]](#endnote-55)  Pappe eventually chose to leave and accepted a teaching job at the University of Exeter and moved to England.[[56]](#endnote-56)

**Whereas the American Studies Association is dedicated to the right of students and scholars to pursue education and research without undue state interference, repression, and military violence, and in keeping with the spirit of its previous statements supports the right of students and scholars to intellectual freedom and to political dissent as citizens and scholars;**

This document and its advocates have not provided any evidence that Israeli academic institutions are guilty of interfering with any of these rights. In fact, just the reverse is the case: Israel and Israeli universities are known and respected for upholding all them. Even Omar Barghouti, a Palestinian BDS leader, attended Tel Aviv University and according to his own reports, faced no discrimination or repression or harassment. While Israel’s efforts to protect its citizens during the terrorist campaigns launched against them starting in 2000 may have caused intermittent inconveniences for Palestinian students, the measures were in no way a systematic policy vis-à-vis Palestinian students. Furthermore, the terrorist campaigns were equally deleterious for Israeli students and their education, though this resolution does not condemn the systematic Palestinian terrorism that harmed Israeli and Palestinian students alike, and necessitated Israel’s protective counter-measures.

Furthermore, if the ASA were really serious about upholding these rights for Palestinian students, it would have investigated the PA and Hamas, and their record of censorship, repression of political dissent, and incitement that glorifies suicide bombers and other terrorists. [See above]

**It is resolved that the American Studies Association (ASA) endorses and will honor the call of Palestinian civil society for a boycott of Israeli academic institutions.**

* Many Palestinian academics and universities do not support this boycott.

	+ Omar Barghouti, a BDS co-founder and leader, does not observe the academic boycott of Israel. In 2009, he enrolled in a PhD program at Tel Aviv University instead of pursuing the degree at a Palestinian university. When asked about this apparent hypocrisy, he declines to answer.[[57]](#endnote-57)
	+ Al-Quds president, Sari Nusseibeh, opposed academic boycotts of Israel, calling instead for “cooperation based on mutual respect.”The school had 60 ongoing joint research projects with Israeli universities in 2009 alone.[[58]](#endnote-58)
* It is not clear that “Palestinian civil society” that calls for BDS in fact represents Palestinians.
	+ Norman Finkelstein, a well-known ally of Israel’s harshest critics, has called the BDS movement a small “cult.,” and harshly criticized its claim to represent civil society. “Who are these organizations? They’re NGOs in Ramallah, one person operations, and **they claim to represent what they call ‘Palestinian Civil Society’**. If they really were Palestinian Civil Society as they claim, then why can they never organize a demonstration of more than 500 people? …**They’re just Ramallah NGOs which represent absolutely nothing**… It’s a very strange thing when the people there who claim to be the “leaders of civil society” can’t organize a demonstration of 500 people among themselves, but they’re telling everyone else abroad what to do.”[[59]](#endnote-59)
	+ According to some sources, the 150 groups that signed the BDS call are generally labor unions and anti-Israel human rights organizations like PICCR, Addameer and Al Mezan (but not the Palestinian Center for Human Rights). Most of the others do not originate in Palestine, are based out of Syria and Jordan, or are world-wide organizations.[[60]](#endnote-60)
	+ Indeed, many Palestinians oppose BDS, including the almost 100,000 Palestinians who work in Israel and in Israeli settlements in the West Bank.[[61]](#endnote-61)
	+ The largest Palestinian trade union, the PGFTU, representing close to 75% of Palestinian workers,[[62]](#endnote-62)opposed the BDS campaign, arguing it is “bad news for Palestinian workers.”[[63]](#endnote-63)
	+ In addition, thousands of Palestinian and Israeli Jews work together in the Barkan zone where they have “created an atmosphere of camaraderie and mutual respect,” according to interviews.[[64]](#endnote-64) Palestinian businessmen have also invested in the Barkan industrial zone. [[65]](#endnote-65) Approximately 16,000 West Bank Palestinian businessmen have founded companies and factories in Israel and the industrial zones of Jewish settlements in the West Bank, according to a 2012 study.[[66]](#endnote-66)These people clearly would be harmed by the “civil society” call for BDS.
	+ When Palestinian billionaire Munib al-Masri met with Rami Levy, owner of Israeli supermarkets in the West Bank, to discuss the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, the BDS movement called for boycotting al-Masri and claimed majority of Palestinians oppose the Arab Peace Initiative.[[67]](#endnote-67) In fact, a 2012 Palestinian poll revealed that a majority of Palestinians support the Saudi Peace Initiative.[[68]](#endnote-68)

**It is also resolved that the ASA supports the protected rights of students and scholars everywhere to engage in research and public speaking about Israel-Palestine and in support of the boycott, divestment, and sanctions [BDS] movement.**

These rights are not in jeopardy, and the same rights should be accorded to those who believe the call for BDS is prejudiced, destructive, and undermines hopes for Palestinian-Israeli peace. Yet this resolution in no way protects the rights of those who disagree with its agenda, dispute its dubious claims, strenuously object to its perversion of the principle of academic freedom, or oppose the injustice it promotes.

1. Or Tshuva, “Left Wing Israeli Academics: Shunned at Home and Abroad,” *Haaretz,* May 17, 2013 at<http://www.haaretz.com/opinion/left-wing-israeli-academics-shunned-at-home-and-abroad.premium-1.524560> [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. David Hirsh, “Do As I Say, Not As I Do,” *Engage,* April 25, 2009 at <http://engageonline.wordpress.com/2009/04/25/omar-barghouti-do-as-i-say-not-as-i-do/> [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Matthew Kalman, “Palestinian University Suspends Contacts With Israeli Academics,” *Chronicle of Higher Education,* Feb. 3, 2009 at <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=921> [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Eric Alterman, “BDS’s Conditions Spell the End of Israel,” *The Nation,* May 3, 2012 at [http://www.thenation.com/blog/167708/opinionnation-forum-boycott-divestment-sanctions-bds#](http://www.thenation.com/blog/167708/opinionnation-forum-boycott-divestment-sanctions-bds) [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. The US Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel website <http://www.usacbi.org/mission-statement/> lists three demands: “Ending its occupation and colonization of all Arab lands and dismantling the Wall; Recognizing the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality; and Respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN resolution 194.” [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
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